

# HOME



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# I was adopted

**Mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters are our links to our past and future. Families tell us who we are, and put our existence into perspective. Imagine then being cut off from your origins and your birthright. Adoption is a sensitive issue for all involved. Some adoptees get on with their lives, content with their new families, without a thought of their parentage; others harbour a desperate desire to put their lives into context by finding their real mother. In a moving story, 'Abigail' tells Caroline Deacon why she felt driven to find her birth mother, despite a loving adoptive family**

**A**s a child, the story I could not hear enough about was how I came to be with Mum and Dad. They went to a special place for babies who don't have mummies and daddies. They looked at all the babies, but when I smiled at them they knew immediately that they wanted me. It was a beautiful way of telling me that I was adopted. Yet I have always been aware of something missing. Mum and Dad tell me I was "highly strung"; that from 5am, I would continually hit my head on the bed-head, while singing nursery rhymes to myself. I believe that in my subconscious I knew simply that something was missing.

Someone had given birth to me and then not wanted me any more. I cherished a romantic vision in my heart of a sort of Joan of Arc figure. I believed that she stood for something; that it could never have been any other way.

At school, aged 12, I told someone that I was adopted. After that, they called me "bastard". I remember walking up the footpath on the way home with them shouting it behind me. I felt pain, but also anger which developed into a sort of pride and I thought, "Yes, sod it, I am." I became defiant, rebellious – I pushed my parents to the limit. Many times Dad said, "What am I doing wrong with you? What am I not getting right?" They felt they were failing, and I would say, "But it's not you..." I always needed to know they loved me. People who knew

nothing about me said: "You are so like your mum..." and I wanted to say, "But I can't be." I realised there was a part of me that was like them and yet there was a part of me that definitely wasn't and I felt I really stood out.

When I left school, I started training as a nurse at Brighton hospital. I lived in a Gothic nurses' home and wasn't sleeping well. The atmosphere of the place upset me – I felt inhibited. I asked for a transfer, which I got, and immediately started to sleep well. Many years later I discovered that this is where my birth mother had lived before and after I was born. One day, I came across this big

**'Someone had given birth to me and then not wanted me any more. I cherished a romantic vision of a Joan of Arc figure'**

house, and thought, 'I know this house – I don't know why, but it has something to do with me.' I rang Mum and described it to her. I was staggered when she said, "Oh yes, that's where you were born." I felt elated, but yet terrified... this was all suddenly very close. From then, I would wonder about everyone I saw, am I related to them? Do they look like me?

Having discovered my birth mother had lived in Brighton, I decided to search for her. I went about it completely randomly – I got all the phone books for the area and rang everyone with the same surname as my birth certificate, asking them if my date of birth meant anything to them. I got nowhere. In fact, the search took many years. Things kept occurring to trigger it off again; for instance it would bug me having to put, "not applicable" to past medical >



history questions on job applications. It was frustrating because, nowadays, if you adopt someone, you get lots of background, whereas I felt I had just been dumped. Mum and Dad had picked me up and loved me to death, but nevertheless it felt as if the stork had dropped me out of the blue and where the hell had I come from?

When I got married, I knew I wanted to have children. Of course it is classic – adopted children want to keep reproducing. When I wasn't doing that I was bringing animals home. The other classic thing – I just filled my house with stuff. I'm a collector, a hoarder, it makes me feel secure.

In 1989, when my first baby was born, I felt terribly strongly that here was a blood line. I couldn't sleep for ages. I couldn't stop looking and touching and wondering. I felt he somehow had hidden knowledge of the family that wasn't there. I was so protective – going out in the car took a lot of courage in case something happened to him, because this was my connection, my link. Breastfeeding him was very special. I watched him constantly, thinking, "I never had this, I really want to enjoy this."

A couple of years later, I had a miscarriage, which hit me hard. I felt I'd lost not only the baby, but the possibility of more connections. I contacted a social worker with whom I then became friends, and she picked up the search again for me. She wrote letters, but we got led up the garden path very quickly. A reply came saying, We have a forwarding address for this lady; write a letter and send us a photograph and we'll pass them on. Writing that letter was the hardest thing I ever had to do. And how do you choose a photograph for someone who has never seen you and yet is so important in your life? Well, we did it, sent it off, but then got it back saying sorry she moved on years ago – no forwarding address. I felt as if I'd been picked up and then dropped again.

In the end, finding her happened suddenly. At Christmas, I was buzzing and I just knew from my guts upwards that I was going to find her and find her soon. I couldn't sleep at nights and I was very happy and very excited. We decided to go back to Brighton and we found the house where my grandparents had lived. We met the next door neighbours, had a cup of coffee and the woman said, "Oh yes, I remember your

mother." That was freaky. A week later we finally managed to contact her.

The first meeting was uncanny. The feeling came up from the tip of my toes, we both looked at each other and I really felt I knew her. When I hugged her I could hardly breathe. One of the first things I said to her was that she smelt right. It was as if I had smelt her before, bottled it away deep inside, and when I smelt her again it was like uncorking that bottle. I recognised her from some inner part of me. It was incredibly powerful. One of the first things she said to me was, "I knew you were coming." Then she explained how she had felt me coming; had felt me breeze in and out several times, but this time was for real.


She had married someone else after my birth, had more children, and they had always known all about me. They even used to toast me at Christmas. The first thing my half-sister said was, "What took you so long?"

There was nothing unexpected. All of my questions were, at last, answered. I no longer felt alone. It was like the feeling you get when you come back from a holiday and walk back through your own front door.

There are so many similarities between us. I now knew where the quirky bits of my personality had come from – the bits Mum and Dad couldn't understand. For instance, I started training to be a healer, having been interested in spiritual issues since I was a teenager. When I found my birth mother, Jo, I found that she is a spiritualist, a healer, and involved in the medical field as a counsellor.

We look alike, wear the same clothes and she wore exactly the same outfit to her wedding as I did! My cousins look identical to my children – spookily so.

After I had found Jo, I was scared to tell Mum and Dad. I knew that this was their biggest fear and I'd hit it head-on. Yet I wanted desperately to share it with them. More than anything, it reinforced the fact that I do really love them, and I have been able to accept them as they really are.

What I want to do now is to improve the relationship, especially with my Mum. Finding Jo has ironed out a lot of my own insecurities. I believe Mum still has a fear of me abandoning her, which is sad. At the end of the day, I am who I am and they did everything they could for me and more – I feel I am very lucky having the parents I have. 



**After the birth of her own first child, "Abigail" (above) felt very strongly that at last she had what she had previously lacked – a bloodline. She was very protective of the baby, whom she saw as a precious link to her own history**

## OFFICE OF NATIONAL STATISTICS

**Once 18, adopted people have the right to see their original birth details. Anybody in England and Wales seeking their natural parents can apply for their original birth certificate through the ONS. They also run an adoption contact register where adopted people and natural relatives can register if they want to make contact. You can write to the ONS for further information at Adoption Section, ONS, Smedley Hydro, Trafalgar Road, Southport, PR8 2HH.**

## MERSEYSIDE ADOPTION CENTRE – 0151 709 9122

**Independent and professional advice on adoption, fostering and post-adoption counselling. They can help adopted people, birth parents, adoptive parents, step-parent adoptees and agencies, and they offer training.**

## FAMILY CARE ADOPTION CENTRE – 0131 225 6441

**This centre provides information, counselling and help to adopted people and birth family members who wish to make contact via Birthlink – the Adoption Contact Register for Scotland – where the adopted person was either born or adopted in Scotland.**

## POST ADOPTION

**CENTRE – 0171 284 0555**

**Offers support, counselling, advice and information to anybody involved in adoption.**

## BRITISH AGENCIES OF ADOPTION AND FOSTERING – 0171 593 2000

**Provides general information leaflets for birth parents and adopted children and offers advice and further information over the phone.**

## NORCAP (National Organisation For Counselling Adoptees And Parents) – 01865 875000

**Offers practical advice to adult adoptees wishing to trace birth family members and offers support to birth and adoptive parents. NORCAP also maintains a contact register. For further information, write enclosing an SAE to NORCAP, 112 Church Road, Wheatley, Oxfordshire, OX33 1LU.**